

# Using Progressive I-Can Statements to Promote Learner Confidence in Writing

The challenges of teaching writing and encouraging students to write are many. However, one of the most difficult issues to deal with is students' reluctance to write in any language, even their home language. Because of this reluctance, being asked to write in English as a foreign or second language can feel like a double burden. Learners of English often are not confident that they have the basic writing skills or the language skills needed to compose a piece of writing in English.

The objective of this article is to suggest ways to build students' confidence in their ability to write in English. Building students' confidence should be a priority for teachers of students in any age group and at all levels of language proficiency. One way to address the issue is by creating opportunities for students to state what they perceive they are able to do. The statements students produce about their perceived abilities can be referred to as I-can statements, such

as "I can write names of foods in English" or "I can write about daily activities in English." This approach is most effective when students are given a target so that even before they begin, they have a sense of what they are expected to accomplish.

To help students be aware of what they need to accomplish to be successful, teachers can make use of I-can statements in different ways. They might present a single I-can statement associated with a task and have students write or say the statement when they complete that task. Another option is for teachers to begin activities by presenting a list of I-can statements that students can copy, check off, and read out loud as they progress through an activity. Depending on students' ability levels, the teacher can present I-can statements in scrambled order and have students number the statements as they complete each task or at the end of the activity. Students at a more advanced stage of learning may even offer to add I-can

statements that the teacher had not originally included. The teacher can seize the opportunity to acknowledge the students' success and add their I-can statements to the list. Students can create more and more of their own I-can statements as their language abilities increase; allowing students to create their own statements can encourage them to take initiative in their learning.

Another alternative is to present the I-can statements as "I-will" statements before beginning an activity or unit. Students can write their self-ability statements at the beginning and/or at the end of each unit or activity, or they can collect their statements at the end of their notebooks, or students can have a separate notebook just for I-can statements as a form of short-entry learner diary or systematized self-assessment. Young students, for example, can take the notebook home and share their progress with others. As students' skills develop, they can use records of their I-can statements to gauge their own perceived level of language proficiency. As Coombe and Canning (2002) point out, much developmental work has been done in the area of self-assessment that supports the use of "ability statements." In addition, self-assessment, including the use of I-can statements, may lead to greater learner empowerment and autonomy (Little 2009).

In this article, we present a series of basic writing activities that demonstrate how I-can statements can be used. Following Linse (2005), we have broken down the tasks of the activities into small steps, being careful to provide learners with one instruction at a time. Breaking down complex processes into simpler steps makes learning a more attainable goal. Students write an I-can statement when they achieve each step, and as they do, they learn to recognize their achievements, thus developing confidence in their abilities to reach goals and to move on to the next level of complexity. As students complete tasks successfully, they record their I-can statements and refer to them to see precisely the steps they have taken and the progress they have made.

Each activity we present progressively adds to the complexity of the previous activity, and each ends with asking the students to provide I-can statements. The I-can statements are

intended to motivate the students to move on to another level of complexity with confidence by helping them realize what they have already accomplished. We are applying Vygotsky's constructivist theory of proximal development (Daniels 2005; Mooney 2000) by helping the students move from one level of difficulty to the next; we are also applying Bruner's scaffolding theory (Olson 2007) by providing needed support for the students by modeling the desired outcomes for each activity and gradually shifting the production responsibility to the students. The types of activities vary; we have taken into consideration multiple intelligences in education (Gardner 2005) and the students' learning styles. The activities we describe cater to visual, kinesthetic, linguistic, spatial, logical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligences (Gardner 2006). In addition, in order to ease students into the writing process, we have provided scaffolding in the form of guided questions and sentence frames.

These activities are examples of what teachers can do to break down more complex writing tasks into small steps that are hands-on, fun, and interesting. Teachers can pick and choose from the activities or adapt them based on the level of language proficiency of their students and the focus of the lesson. Nonetheless, since students often miss or forget a stage of their learning process, teachers should consider beginning with an activity that is a level or so below their students' perceived proficiency. Doing so helps students benefit from spiraling (Bruner 2007), by reapplying and reinforcing learning points from previous activities and building onto what they have already grasped.

This brings us back to the intent of this article, which is to offer support for the concept of breaking down tasks in order to build student self-confidence and motivation to tackle more complex tasks. For example, if the students are false beginners, they can start with building confidence in letter recognition and spelling of simple words; such simple activities begin with building young learners' confidence in copying words in English. The activities gradually increase in complexity up to writing a short message.

These activities are not intended to be used one immediately after the other in one

class period. We present them here in order of complexity, but teachers will probably use them as needed to supplement other teaching materials. Also, while the activities are appropriate for young learners, they can benefit students of any age who are in the beginning to lower-intermediate stages of learning English.

### **Activity 1: Copying words**

**Focus:** Building confidence in holding a writing utensil, shaping letters, and copying accurately

**Suggested I-can statement:** I can copy words in English.

**Materials:** food chart, paper, color markers, writing utensils, scissors

**Time:** 7–15 minutes (All times given in these activities may vary, depending on students' ages and the number of students participating.)

#### **Steps:**

1. Prepare a food chart with drawings or picture cutouts of each food item. Write the name of each food item next to the picture of the item.

Food items should be fun party food, such as cake, cupcakes, ice cream, cookies, chocolate bars, doughnuts, grapes, apples, bananas, fruit salad, pizza, chips, nuts, sandwiches, cheese, spaghetti, water, lemonade, orange juice, soda, chocolate milk—or any foods that are popular with the students. This is an opportunity to expose students to vocabulary. Teachers should adapt the list according to food that is available locally or to the vocabulary found in the prescribed teaching materials being used where they teach.

2. Hand out paper, markers, and scissors to the students. Tell students they are going to plan a party. This party could be to celebrate an upcoming holiday, like Valentine's Day, or a birthday.

3. Ask students to draw and cut out a shape related to the party. Students can draw the outline of a cake, a heart, a birthday hat, a pizza, or something similar on which they can write the names of food, as described in the next step. If scissors are not available to cut out the shapes, students can work with the drawing on the paper.

4. Provide the following sentence frames:

- At my party, I want to eat \_\_\_\_\_.
- At my party, I want to drink \_\_\_\_\_.

5. On the cutout or drawing, students copy from the teacher's food chart the sentence frames, filling in the name of each food and drink item they want to eat or drink at the party. Each student must select at least two items, but students can choose to select all if time permits.

6. Students share their work and tell their classmates what they want to eat and/or drink at their parties.

7. Ask students, "What can you do?" Students' reply will be something similar to "I can copy words in English." (At first, teachers may have to try different questions—such as "Now that you have finished this activity, what can you do?" or "What can you do in English?"—to elicit I-can statements from students. After students grow accustomed to using the statements in their learning, though, the question "What can you do?" will prompt students to respond by saying their I-can statements.)

8. Write students' I-can statement(s) on the board.

9. Have students copy their I-can statement(s) in their notebooks.

Copying letters and words is like drawing. This type of drawing provides practice with shaping or forming letters as well as with recognition of letters and words. Copying activities can be considered a first stage in building confidence in writing.

### **Activity 2: Spelling**

**Focus:** Building confidence in spelling in English

**Suggested I-can statement:** I can spell words in English.

**Materials:** small-print word strips, paper, writing utensils

**Time:** 5–10 minutes

#### **Steps:**

1. Prepare and number small-print word strips with vocabulary being taught, one word per strip.

2. Place the word strips at the front of the class so that they can only be seen from up close. If possible, the strips can be taped to the board.

3. Divide students into groups. The size of the groups will depend largely on the number of students in the class and on the physical setup of the classroom. Teachers should know which group settings work best for each of their classrooms and groups of students.

4. Give each group of students a sheet of paper on which they can write the words.

5. Number the students in each group; this will be the order in which they will go to the board.

6. Have the first group member go to the front of the room, select a word, read it to himself or herself, come back to the group, and spell out the word from memory to the second group member.

7. The second group member writes the word, letter by letter, on the group's sheet of paper.

8. The student who has just written the word then hurries to the front of the class to select and read a different word, goes back to the group, and spells out the word to the next group member, who writes out the word letter by letter. Then it is the third group member's turn to be the speller—and so on.

9. Give the groups a set time to finish the task, perhaps three minutes.

10. When time is up, collect the sheets of paper and quickly determine which group has the largest number of words spelled correctly.

11. Review the correct spelling of each word by having one student from each group call out the spelling of a word. Do this successively until all the words used in the activity are written on the board.

12. Acknowledge the group that has the largest number of words spelled correctly on the sheet of paper.

13. Ask students, "What can you do?" Students' reply will be something similar to "I can spell words in English."

14. Write students' I-can statement(s) on the board.

15. Have students write/copy their I-can statement(s) in their notebooks.

Note that in this activity, it is not necessary for all groups to be working on spelling the same word at the same time. In fact, the teacher can choose to spread the strips of

paper around the classroom so that the students who are reading a word on the strips can avoid having to crowd around one strip. Also, the group member who is dictating the letters of the chosen word can go back to the board as many times as needed until he or she feels that the word is spelled correctly by the next group member. The group members who are waiting for their turns can help out by agreeing that the spelling is correct or by suggesting that the word be spelled differently—but they cannot assist in the actual writing of the word.

### **Activity 3: Writing phrases/slogans**

**Focus:** Building confidence in writing phrases in English

**Suggested I-can statement:** I can write phrases in English.

**Materials:** candy wrappers or wrapped candy, vocabulary chart with featured candy ingredients, paper, color markers, scissors

**Time:** 10–15 minutes

#### **Steps:**

1. Collect candy wrappers or purchase candy with interesting slogans—for instance, "ChocoMight – For the Hero in Your Life"; "Q&A – The Answer to Sweet Questions"; "Dark Power – For the Fearless"; "Diet Choc – The Light Way to Enjoy Life." The slogans on the wrappers can be in English or in another language. The language on the candy wrappers is not significant because regardless of whether the candy wrappers are in English or in the students' mother tongue, students will still have to report to the group in English.

2. Prepare a vocabulary chart with names of ingredients that are featured in candy, such as milk, sugar, butter, cocoa, cream, caramel, nuts, raisins, rice crisps, mint flavor, etc. This activity is an opportunity to expose students to this type of vocabulary, but the vocabulary is not the focus of the activity.

3. Bring either the wrapped candy or only the candy wrappers to class. If you bring the candy, you can reward the students by letting them eat the candy at the end of the activity.

4. Divide students into groups. The size of the groups will depend largely on the number of students in the class and on the

physical setup of the classroom. Three or four students per group is recommended for this activity.

5. Give each group one or more pieces of candy or candy wrappers, paper, color markers, and scissors.

6. Have each group report in English on the name of the candy, one or two of its most attractive featured ingredients, and any slogans they have found on the candy wrappers. Having a chart with some featured candy ingredients at the front of the class will help the class avoid spending too much time on translations for these words.

7. Each group draws and cuts out the outline of a large candy wrapper.

8. Each group creates a name for its new candy, its ingredients, and a slogan for the candy. These should be in English.

9. On the drawing of the candy wrapper, the group members write the name of the candy, its ingredients, and the candy slogan. The slogans created by the students will vary in complexity based on the level of language proficiency and ages of the students. Slogans can be brilliant and witty or very simple.

10. Each group presents its product to the larger group.

11. Ask students, "What can you do?" Students' reply will be something similar to "I can write phrases in English" or "I can write slogans in English."

12. Write students' I-can statement(s) on the board.

13. Have students write their I-can statement(s) in their notebooks.

#### Alternate phrase or slogan activities

Instead of having students write slogans for candy wrappers, consider having them write any of the following:

- phrases about family members to place on a cutout of a T-shirt, such as "Betsy – the best sister in the world"; "Has-san – my favorite uncle"; "Children – future grandparents"; "Mothers – rulers of the land"
- phrases about cities or parks to place on a large cutout of a keychain, such as "Delmon – Land of Immortality";

"Crispy Park – Paradise on Earth"; "Atari Mountain – Your Virtual World"

- phrases about different occupations to place on large cut-out mugs, such as "Nurses – touch your heart"; "Teachers – make leaders"; "Chefs – give flavor to life"
- phrases to place on labels for soap, toothpaste, shoe brands, or other products; examples include "RoseOlive Soap – petal smooth skin"; "Crystal Clear Toothpaste – for sparkling clean teeth"; "Flash Tennis Shoes – get there fast!"
- slogans for businesses, including banks, supermarkets, or fast-food restaurants, such as "Cheese Land – your gourmet dream" or "Marquis Bank – Your money is in our safe."

Phrase building is an important skill. Activities that encourage students to combine words into phrases can be a way of giving them practice with collocations, word groups, or thought chunks. In addition, this type of activity has potential to encourage students to think creatively.

#### Activity 4: Writing door signs or short sentences

**Focus:** Building confidence in writing short sentences

**Suggested I-can statement(s):** I can write short sentences in English; I can write signs in English.

**Materials:** paper, color markers, scissors

**Time:** 7–10 minutes

#### Steps:

1. Ask students to think of something or someone they want to keep out of their bedrooms—for instance, insects, animals, noise, nightmares, bad weather, a cartoon character, a sibling, and so on.

2. Ask students to think of reasons why they want that thing or person to stay out of their bedrooms.

3. On the board, provide a sentence frame, such as this one:

"\_\_\_\_\_, stay out! \_\_\_\_\_."  
(reason)

Here are some sample sentences:

- “Spiders, stay out! Because only humans are allowed.”
- “Nightmares, stay out! Because I am sleeping.”
- “Dogs, stay out! Because you are messy.”
- “Cold weather, stay out! Because you make me shiver.”
- “Ghosts, stay out! Because you are ugly and scary.”

4. Have students create a “stay-out door-knob sign” by taking a sheet of paper and folding it in half lengthwise, top to bottom. At one end of the folded paper, students cut a half circle so that the sign will fit over a doorknob.

5. Students unfold their papers, write their “stay-out” statements on their doorknob signs, and decorate them.

6. Students show and read out their doorknob signs to the class.

7. Ask students, “What can you do?” Students’ reply will be something similar to “I can write short sentences in English” or “I can write stay-out doorknob signs in English.”

8. Write students’ I-can statement(s) on the board.

9. Have students write their I-can statement(s) in their notebooks.

In case the teacher wants to avoid sentence fragments, such as in the example “Spiders, stay out! Because only humans are allowed,” there are a few alternatives. The easiest is simply to remove the exclamation point and use a lowercase letter for the word because. The result is a complete sentence: “Spiders, stay out because only humans are allowed.” Another alternative is to remove the word because and let it be implied: “Spiders, stay out! Only humans are allowed.” In these alternatives, the sentence might lose some of its emphasis, but the teacher and learners avoid using a fragment.

#### Alternate activity

Instead of writing stay-out signs, students can write reminders or come-in signs. The sentence frames can be the following:

- “\_\_\_\_\_, remember to \_\_\_\_\_.”
- “\_\_\_\_\_, come in and \_\_\_\_\_.”

Here are some sample sentences:

- “Lizzy, remember to wash your hands before dinner.”
- “Grassy, remember to study for the math quiz on Thursday.”
- “Little Sis, remember to knock before entering.”
- “Mother, come in and make yourself at home.”
- “Children, come in and have some cookies.”

#### Activity 5: Writing and organizing sentences

**Focus:** Building confidence in writing sentences and organizing them in a logical order

**Suggested I-can statement(s):** I can write sentences about candy; I can organize sentences in a logical order.

**Materials:** paper, writing utensils, candies of different colors and shapes (e.g., gummy bears, jelly worms, jelly fruit, jelly beans)

**Time:** 10–15 minutes

#### Steps:

1. Write the following guided questions on the board:

- What does it look like?
- What color is it?
- What does it smell like?
- What does it taste like?
- What is a good name for it?

2. Model by showing the class a jelly candy and answering the guided questions about the candy.

Examples of possible answers:

- My candy looks like a bottle of cola.
- It is brown.
- It smells like cola.
- It tastes like jelly.
- A good name for my candy is Jolly Cola (or My candy’s name is Jolly Cola).

3. Hand out two or three different jelly candies to each student.

4. Ask students to choose a candy and answer the guided questions about candy. To answer the question about taste, students should be allowed to taste the candy.

5. Ask students to organize the sentences in the example into a logical order. This is like giving students a framework for brainstorm-



ing and then asking them to put their ideas in an order that makes some sense. Class consensus on the selected order is not vital. This is an opportunity to expose students to the concept of organizing ideas into some rational order. Students are being prepared to use this skill later when the goal is to devise longer, more complex writing samples.

Here is an example of sentences in a logical order:

*My candy looks like a bottle of cola. It is brown. It smells like cola, and it tastes like jelly. A good name for it is Jolly Cola.*

6. Ask a few students to tell or read about their candies to the group.
7. Ask students, "What can you do?" Students' reply will be something similar to "I can write sentences about candy" or "I can organize sentences in a logical order."
8. Write students' I-can statements on the board.
9. Have students write their I-can statement(s) in their notebooks.

Notice that the example in Step 5 includes joining two of the sentences with the coordinate conjunction *and*. Teachers do not need to go into a lesson on coordinate conjunctions or joining sentences, but if students naturally use *and*, teachers can take advantage of the opportunity to expose students to this option.

#### Alternate activity for writing and organizing sentences

Instead of jelly candies, consider handing out small plastic toys or picture cutouts from magazines. Instead of writing about a jelly candy, students can write guided answers about a food item, an imaginary pet, an imaginary superhero, or a family member. Of course, the guided questions and sentence frames for the answers must be adapted accordingly.

#### Activity 6: Writing about weekend activities

**Focus:** Building confidence in writing about weekend activities

**Suggested I-can statement(s):** I can write sentences about weekend activities; I can organize sentences into a paragraph.

**Materials:** paper, writing utensils

**Time:** 15–20 minutes

#### Steps:

1. Model by drawing on the board a large clock with numbers, but without clock hands.
2. Have each student draw his or her own large clock without clock hands.
3. Ask students to tell you what they do each hour on a weekend day.
4. Model by drawing on the board a small sketch representing what students say they do at each hour. For example, for 7 o'clock, the drawing might be of a toothbrush; at 8, a teacup; at 9, a television set; at 10, a swimming pool; etc. Instead of making small drawings as prompts, an alternative is for students to write a word as a prompt for each hour on the clock. The drawings or the words are important because they serve as prompts for sentences the students will write later. The idea is to break down large tasks into small steps.
5. Suggest that students think of themselves as an imaginary pet, cartoon character, stuffed animal, or superhero.
6. Have students make small drawings on their own "clocks" of something that reminds them of what they or their imaginary persona does each hour.
7. Using the prompts on the clock, students write sentences about what their imaginary persona does each hour of a weekend day.
8. Provide the students with sentence frames; for example:

- I am a \_\_\_\_\_.
- My name is \_\_\_\_\_.
- I am very busy.
- At six o'clock in the morning, I \_\_\_\_\_.
- At seven o'clock, I \_\_\_\_\_.
- At eight o'clock, I \_\_\_\_\_.
- At two in the afternoon, I \_\_\_\_\_.
- At seven in the evening, I \_\_\_\_\_.
- At the end of the day, I \_\_\_\_\_.
- At ten o'clock, I \_\_\_\_\_.

Below are examples of sentences using these frames:

- I am a *lizard*.
- My name is *Lizzy*.
- I am very busy.

- At six o'clock in the morning, *I wake up and brush my teeth.*
- At seven o'clock, *I have flies and tea for breakfast.*

This list is just a sample; students should write activities in the blanks in all the remaining sentence frames.

9. Have students place their sentences in order to form a coherent message. Here is a sample of a coherent message using the sentences:

*I am a lizard. My name is Lizzy. I am very busy. At six o'clock in the morning, I wake up and brush my teeth. At seven o'clock, I have flies and tea for breakfast. At eight o'clock, I exercise at the gym. At two in the afternoon, I climb a tall tree and play chess with a spider. At seven in the evening, I have fireflies for dinner. At the end of the day, I am tired. At ten o'clock, I go to bed and dream of ants crawling on the moon.*

10. Have a few students read their short paragraphs (stories) to the group.

11. Ask students, "What can you do?" Students' reply will be something similar to "I can write sentences about weekend activities" or "I can organize sentences into a paragraph."

12. Write students' I-can statements on the board.

13. Have students write their I-can statement(s) in their notebooks.

In this activity, teachers may choose to have students write about their own daily activities rather than the activities of an imaginary being. One argument in favor of writing about an imaginary character instead of about oneself is that it can lower the affective filter (see Krashen 2003), possibly allowing students to say or write more creatively. Students' fear of making mistakes or of being mocked by peers is lessened because students are allowed to speak through a voice that is not their own. It is the imaginary character who makes eventual mistakes or does something ridiculous, not the students themselves. In addition, if a student has not had many opportunities to be very active, he or she can still write in first person about many activities without hesitation. Nonetheless, in case a student prefers to write about himself or herself

instead of an imaginary character, that should also be an option.

### Alternate activity for writing about weekend activities

Instead of having students write stories about a weekend day of their imaginary personas, they can work in pairs, and each student can write about the weekend activities of his or her partner. In this case, students would be writing stories by using the third person point of view. The result would be, for example,

*This is my friend Lizzy. She is very busy. At six o'clock in the morning, she wakes up and brushes her teeth. At seven o'clock, she eats fruit for breakfast. At eight o'clock, she exercises at the gym. At two in the afternoon, she takes a nap. At seven in the evening, she helps cook dinner for her family. At the end of the day, she is tired. At ten o'clock, she goes to bed and dreams of another beautiful day.*

Teachers can choose to have students use first or third person, depending on the teaching point being studied.

### Activity 7: Writing a short message

**Focus:** Building confidence in writing email messages using the simple past tense

**Suggested I-can statement(s):** I can write a short message; I can write an email message; I can write a postcard message; I can write a short letter; I can write about my trip.

**Materials:** paper, writing utensils, color markers

**Time:** 15–20 minutes

#### Steps:

1. Have students tell a partner about a place they have visited or a place they dream of visiting.
2. Tell students to answer guided questions about their trips. The trips can be real or imaginary. Here are sample guided questions:
  - Where did you go?
  - What did you visit?
  - What did you see?
  - What did you do?
  - What did you like best?

Note that these questions are in the past tense because in this activity, students are



going to write about a trip that has already taken place.

3. Have students imagine that they are an imaginary pet, a stuffed animal, a superhero, or a cartoon character who is writing an email message to a friend, and that their imaginary character has taken a trip to the place students talked about in Step 1. Students write about the trip using the guided questions provided. By organizing their answers in a logical order, students are producing a short message, perhaps an email message or a postcard message or a short letter. Here is a sample:

*Hi, Mariam.*

*Last week I went to Brazil. I visited Copacabana Beach. I climbed an umbrella and watched people playing volleyball on the beach. At lunchtime I ate cashews with flies and drank coconut water. I love the taste of Brazilian flies with salty beach sand.*

*See you soon!*

*Lizzy, the Lizard*

4. On a separate piece of paper, have each student draw a picture representing his or her trip.
5. Take students' email message stories, shuffle them, and pass them out among the class members, avoiding giving a story to the person who wrote it.
6. Take students' drawings representing the stories and do the same.
7. Have each student read out loud the story that he or she receives.
8. The other students listen carefully to check who has the drawing that matches the email message that is being read. The student who has the matching drawing calls out, "I have it!" That student gets to be the next one to read the story that he or she has received.
9. Ask students, "What can you do?" Students' reply will be something similar to "I can write an email message" or "I can write about my trip."
10. Write students' I-can statement(s) on the board.
11. Have students write their I-can statement(s) in their notebooks.

For this activity, we suggest a number of I-can statements. In most cases, as the complexity of the activities increases, students make use of a wider variety of skills. As a result, the number of possible I-can statements is likely to rise as well. We encourage the use of any I-can statements relevant to the work being done and the skills being practiced.

## Conclusion

We offer these activities as a starting point. Teachers can feel free to adapt them to fit specific needs, or to create similar activities to help students develop increasingly advanced writing skills. Beyond that, teachers can look for opportunities to utilize I-can statements, and to break down learning tasks into smaller steps, as a way to increase students' sense of accomplishment and build their confidence.

While most teachers naturally want to help students develop the needed confidence to write, textbooks sometimes neglect to address building students' confidence. Thus, teachers can create their own activities or adapt activities found in textbooks. For example, having students add drawings and cutouts can turn writing into a more exciting, fun, interesting, and attractive activity. Furthermore, teachers can break down complicated tasks into simpler stages by providing sentence frames and guided questions as prewriting activities, thus making learning a more attainable goal. Ultimately, teachers can spark students' motivation to learn by giving them opportunities to succeed and an awareness of their accomplishments. When students feel successful, they develop the self-confidence to produce and to move on to the next stage of the learning process.

In this article, we suggest using I-can statements to build students' confidence in their ability to write in English. Additional benefits to using I-can statements are that they (a) provide students with an opportunity to recognize their own accomplishments; (b) encourage students to take initiative in their learning, particularly when they are able to formulate their own I-can statements; (c) provide students with a visual means of proudly sharing their progress with others; (d) are applicable for students of all ages and all levels of language proficiency, from primary through college; (e) can be a sys-

tematic means of tallying one's own progress; and (f) can be a means by which students gauge their own perceived level of language proficiency.

Although the examples and activities in this article are related to developing students' writing skills, teachers can certainly apply the same principles of promoting learner confidence to teaching listening, speaking, and reading skills. In fact, using self-ability statements to help students build self-confidence to continue learning can be applied to virtually any field of study.

## References

- Bruner, J. 2007. *In search of pedagogy*, Vol. 1. London: Routledge.
- Coombe, C., and C. Canning. 2002. Using self-assessment in the classroom: Rationale and suggested techniques. *Karen's Linguistic Issues*. [www3.telus.net/linguisticsissues/selfassess2.html](http://www3.telus.net/linguisticsissues/selfassess2.html).
- Daniels, H. 2005. *Introduction to Vygotsky*, 2nd ed. London: Routledge.
- Gardner, H. 2005. *The development and education of the mind: The selected works of Howard Gardner*. London: Routledge.
- Gardner, H. 2006. *Multiple intelligences: New horizons in theory and practice*. New York: Basic Books.
- Krashen, S. 2003. *Explorations in language acquisition and use: The Taipei lectures*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Linse, C. 2005. *Practical English language teaching (PELT): Young learners*. Series ed. D. Nunan. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Little, D. 2009. Language learner autonomy and the European language portfolio: Two L2 English examples. *Language Teaching* 42 (2): 222–33.
- Mooney, C. G. 2000. *Theories of childhood: An introduction to Dewey, Montessori, Erikson, Piaget & Vygotsky*. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.
- Olson, D. 2007. *Jerome Bruner: The cognitive revolution in educational theory*. New York: Continuum.

---

**FIFE MACDUFF** is the Regional English Language Officer (RELO) in Nepal. Since 1976 he has been an instructor, teacher trainer, and administrator in the fields of teaching English and international education. Besides the United States, he has taught in Angola, Bahrain, Brazil, Mexico, Mozambique, and Myanmar.

**KHADJA ALHAYKI** is the RELO Assistant in the Gulf Region. She has been working in the field of education since 1994 and has been actively involved in teaching, teacher training, and curriculum development in Bahrain.

**CAROLINE LINSE** is a Senior Lecturer at Queen's University Belfast, where she teaches in both the Master's and Doctoral Programs in TESOL. She has extensive experience teaching English to Young Learners and is the author of a variety of materials for learners as well as their teachers.